Agee's Rhetoric of Splendor

—Richard Hayes

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by James Finn

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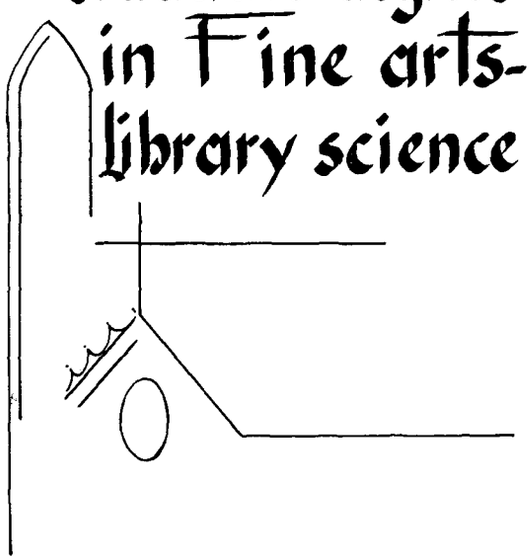

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

THE DEBATE CONTINUES

TWO WEEKS AGO, in an editorial called "An End of Silence," we commented on criticisms of U.S. defense and foreign policy in the last days of Congress, led by Senators Kennedy of Massachusetts and Fulbright of Arkansas. In their remarks we saw signs that U.S. policy in these two areas would be subjected to vigorous national debate in coming months—a development we welcomed because "at this point in our history it is vital that government and people come to a realistic appraisal of our national position in the light of changing events."

A few days after that editorial was written, the debate was carried one step further. Speaking just before Congress finally adjourned, Senator Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts launched a counterattack against those who say the U. S. is in danger because the U.S.S.R. is ahead in missile power.

The prime target for Senator Saltonstall's remarks was obviously the Democratic Senator from his own state, John F. Kennedy, who had told the Senate that Soviet superiority in missile power would after 1960 largely cancel our retaliatory power and leave the free world open to diplomacy by threat. In his defense of the Eisenhower Administration, Senator Saltonstall said that critics of defense policies base their attacks on "opinion" rather than fact. They ignore, he said, the progress made by the U.S. in such fields as the application of nuclear power to naval vessels and the development of intermediate-range missiles.

As far as intercontinental missiles are concerned Senator Saltonstall charged that critics of the Administration ignore U.S. ability to mass-produce at great speed once "a decision has been made to concentrate on a particular missile." Balance in defense measures is what is necessary, he maintained; "it is our job" he told the Senate, "to strike the balance which will most effectively . . . insure the security of our nation. This is the balance that we have achieved. . . . I have confidence in the judgment of our President and his military advisers."

SENATOR SALTONSTALL is a respected member of the Senate, and it is good that he took up the challenge to the Administration. What he had to say, however, is unlikely to persuade the increasingly numerous band in and out of Congress who think our greatest danger is complacency, despite recent indications of amazing weapons progress by the Soviet Union. One of those who was not pacified was Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri, former Secretary of the Air Force, who replied sharply to Senator Saltonstall's remarks.

Criticizing President Eisenhower for saying that Congress had given him a billion dollars of defense funds he did not want, Senator Symington took up Senator Saltonstall's points: "If . . . anyone was attempting to tell the people this country is ahead in medium-range ballistic missiles, that is not correct. If the implication was that this country is ahead in long-range ballistic missiles, that is also incorrect. In this latter field, the Russians are at least two years ahead of the United States. If there was an implication that our submarine strength is equal or almost equal to that of the Russians, that is not correct. If the implication was that we will soon have even one operational Polaris [missile-equipped] submarine, that is not correct."

Senator Symington, we think, has the facts on his side. American mass-production can work miracles, but no one really believes that the United States will have intercontinental missiles in mass production by 1960—or very soon after that date, either. Reports that our radar warning system in Turkey detected continuous and successful Soviet

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testing of long-range missiles several years ago are generally accepted—although the American people did not learn this fact until recently. Even if we had intermediate-range ballistic missiles in quantity, these missiles are of limited value without forward bases, and today no one can be sure which bases will be available for them after 1960. It is true that our long-range Atlas has been test-fired successfully, and we seem to have solved the problem of warhead re-entry, but U. S. intercontinental missiles are still a long way from mass production. It should be obvious that the specially prepared missiles which put our thirty- or forty-pound satellites into orbit come nowhere near having the thrust of the Soviet missile which boosted a half-ton sputnik into space.

In short, Senator Saltonstall has made the best case he could for present defense policies, but there are too many facts on the other side which he has not disposed of, and the debate is not finished. One thing is sure: there is no point in acting as if a denial of Soviet accomplishments in this deadly race were somehow "more patriotic" than recognizing them. Our problem is to face the facts so we can deal most effectively with the new threats to our foreign policy posed by Soviet advances.

INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE?

IT IS DIFFICULT to escape the strong impression that public hearings before Congressional committees often have objectives beyond their avowed purpose of supplying Representatives and Senators with the factual background on which sound legislation can be based. Where those ordered to appear are engaged in dubious practices, these hearings sometimes succeed in calling them to the attention of local investigators and prosecutors. And this well-reported process certainly does alert the general public to conditions that demand to be remedied.

As far as obtaining legislation to curb serious evils goes, such hearings tend, then, to build up public support for whatever ensuing bills are proposed in Congress. Where does one draw the line which indicates that the function of supplying legislators with sufficient information on a certain subject has been carried out? When can it be said that further hearings on the matter will serve mainly to confer on a Congressional committee a judicial function for which it has not been empowered —if not to keep committee members in a limelight they hardly find unwelcome?

This is a consideration brought forward in the current Labor Day Statement of the N.C.W.C.'s Social Action Department: "For the past twelve months and more organized labor has been on trial almost continuously before the bar of public opinion . . . . A year ago, in our 1957 Labor Day Statement, we expressed the opinion that this continuing investigation into the internal affairs of American unions would ultimately prove to have been beneficial to the labor movement. We are still of this opinion. Nevertheless we think the time has come to re-examine the situation very carefully with a view to terminating the investigation as soon as it has served its original purpose . . . . To allow it to drag on interminably would serve no useful legislative purpose and might conceivably do serious harm to the labor movement and to the cause of collective bargaining."

When the chairman of the committee, Senator McClellan of Arkansas, reportedly said of this suggestion: "I'm sure every hoodlum, gangster, racketeer and all other segments of the criminal element in this country will heartily applaud it," what did he have primarily in mind? Big racketeers do continue to operate, and public concern has to be kept alive if the legal reforms needed are to be enacted in 1959. But it would scarcely be convincing to imply that the failure of the House to pass the Ives-Kennedy labor reform bill, which was discussed in these columns last week, was due to insufficient evidence on which to legislate.

THE PRESIDENT SPEAKS

THE SUPREME COURT has now heard the arguments of the attorneys for the Little Rock School Board, urging the correctness of District Judge Lemley's two-and-a-half year postponement of school integration, and the arguments of the Solicitor General of the United States and the lawyers representing the N.A.A.C.P., urging that the reversal by the Appellate Court of Judge Lemley's order be sustained. The high court ordered additional briefs from all sides by September 10 and set further oral argument for noon on September 11.

From the demeanor of the Justices as they listened to the arguments, and from the questions they put to the lawyers in the course of their presentations, it would appear that the Court had lost none of its firmness on the issue it ruled on so historically four years ago.

Again and again the Justices brought the arguments back to the pivotal question: can a court

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order be nullified or deferred merely because some elements in a community will commit violence in order to oppose it? And while the final decision of the Court can not be predicted, it seems that thus far at least there has been no satisfactory answer to this question.

It is ironic, however, that on the day before the Justice Department was to represent his Administration's official opposition to any postponement of Little Rock's integration program, President Eisenhower should have broken his long silence and said he would like to see public school integration move "slower."

The nature of the press conference may be responsible in part for this unhappy contradiction. Perhaps the President forgot, for the moment, that he was speaking on the eve of a vitally important Supreme Court hearing on just this subject. Perhaps he didn't realize that his statement would be seized upon by segregationists and would even be used before the Court by the counsel for the Little Rock School Board. We can't think that Mr. Eisenhower would knowingly and purposely lend his support to the Arkansas segregationists who have so contemptuously flouted the law he is sworn to uphold.

Nevertheless, with all the saving considerations one can think of, the President's statement, under these circumstances and at this time, was a shocking and serious blunder.

49TH STATE

WHEN THE CITIZENS of far-flung Alaska voted by better than five to one for admission to the Union as a state, Hawaii was left as the only American Organized Territory. The change had been long in coming. As far back as 1946 Alaskans had voted for statehood (by a comparatively small majority), and the promise of Alaskan statehood had figured prominently in political platforms in recent years.

If strategic considerations had a lot to do with putting statehood across in Washington, economics was back of American acquisition in the first place. Imperial Russia first offered to sell its vast overseas territory in 1855, as the Alaskan fur trade had become unprofitable. The sum of five millions which President Buchanan offered in 1859 was not high enough.

After the Civil War the pressure of Pacific fishing interests opened the way to new negotiations. When the Russian agent, who had been in Washington for several years trying to bring about the sale, said that his government would accept $7,200,000 as the purchase price, Secretary of State Seward accepted the offer that very night; the treaty providing for the transfer was ratified by the Senate in less than two weeks, despite heated agitation about "Seward's folly." Although both parties seemed so eager to effect the transfer, it was several months before President Johnson appointed an American emissary. Primitive traveling conditions then necessitated a full month before General Lovell H. Rousseau could get from Washington, D.C. to Sitka, the Alaskan capital, to take over.

Alaskan voters have proved to be overwhelmingly in favor of a higher status in the Union, with full representation in Washington, despite their fears of higher taxes. They are hoping that their new statehood will lead to a much more extensive development of their giant natural resources, the most important of which at the moment are oil, various metals and timber. Doubtless they are also looking forward to a sharp spurt in next summer's tourist trade.

Alaska constitutes the only state which is not contiguous to the rest of the nation. Its new status establishes a precedent which should facilitate full-fledged admission to the Union of Hawaii, Puerto Rico and other large dependencies that in time indicate a popular desire for statehood. The ties which this new status sets up are closer and more intimate than those existing in, say, the French Union or the British Commonwealth. And they contrast more sharply with those which bind the subject peoples of the U.S.S.R. itself and the Soviet satellites. If, for instance, the people of an American dependency or territory should indicate a strong preference for independence rather than statehood, it would doubtless be granted. Alaskan statehood is a milestone in the extension of access to full-fledged American citizenship, with all its attendant rights, duties and privileges.

VISIT WITH MR. KHRUSHCHEV

ADLAI STEVENSON has apparently not been able to persuade the Soviets to recognize and observe the international copyright laws, one of the objectives of his recent visit to the Soviet Union, but he was able to learn a good deal about the people, the leaders and the conditions of life in the U.S.S.R.

Mr. Stevenson's observations on his tour, in the form of articles written for the North American Newspaper Alliance and published locally in the

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New York *Times,* range over a wide variety of topics, but perhaps his most interesting experience was a two-and-a-half hour talk with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. He found Mr. Khrushchev a man of great personal charm, as does almost everyone who meets him, "unpretentious and jovial," quick to laughter and full of talk about peace and friendship. But beneath this amiability Mr. Stevenson found, again as others have, a rock-like Communist dogmatism and a blindness—sincere or not—to anything outside the Soviet version of reality.

The Soviet Premier told Mr. Stevenson that the world was unquestionably and inexorably going Communist, and that this process had to be accepted as fact and not interfered with. All the trouble in the world, he suggested, resulted from the United States' interference with the irresistible, world-wide movement toward Communism. But when Mr. Stevenson replied that the United States would welcome an agreement of non-interference in the affairs of other countries and cited the intervention of the U.S.S.R. in Hungary and elsewhere, he was answered only by an angry tirade of accusations. Mr. Stevenson saw no sign of flexibility, no hint that the Soviet Union would ever relax its iron grip on the satellite countries.

Some slight grounds for hope in easing the tensions between our country and the Soviet Union were seen by Mr. Stevenson in the fact that economic progress seems genuinely to be the primary Soviet goal, and war would mean the end of any economic advance. Mr. Stevenson noted also a "lively concern for [world] public opinion" among the Soviet leaders, which might militate against the commission of overt acts of aggression. But we fear, as must Mr. Stevenson himself, that there is little of real comfort in these considerations. The rape of Hungary made clear the extent of Soviet regard for world opinion. And the simple facts of Soviet military power indicate that military production has not been downgraded to any reassuring degree.

The Soviet conception of peace, it was made clear by Mr. Khrushchev, includes the active and relentless effort by Communist agents to provoke and intensify whatever tensions can be found in the world situation. Fomenting civil strife and exacerbating internal conflicts is merely, in the Soviet lexicon, cooperating "peacefully" with the tide of the future.

The United States must, of course, continue to hope and work for real peace. As the knowledge of the Soviets which Mr. Stevenson has brought from the U.S.S.R. can be helpful in this effort, it should be valued—and used—accordingly. But what he has told us in these articles, thus far at least, points only to a grim and dangerous future, made so by a powerful and implacable Soviet antagonist.

MODERN REPUBLICANISM

IN THE EARLY days of the first Eisenhower Administration there was a real possibility that the new President would be able to revise and revivify the Republican party in the image of "Modern Republicanism." That promise was not fulfilled. These days not much is heard about "Modern Republicanism," and it is symptomatic that one of its most cogent and articulate exponents, Arthur Larson, recently resigned from government to return to private life.

The task of re-shaping the G.O.P. which President Eisenhower undertook was a hard one, and it is not altogether surprising that he failed to accomplish it. From his first day in office it was clear that on many issues vital to his program he had to count heavily on support by the Democrats against the more conservative members of his own party. Yet when elections came, the President's personal prestige was used to help these same G.O.P. legislators win re-election. Apparently, the President never could bring himself to withhold support from any Republican, even from those members of his party who fought his program in Congress.

Now Mr. Eisenhower has changed his course. Announcing his plans to take as active a part in the coming campaign as he can, he told reporters that he will withhold his support from members of his party who fought him in Congress on three issues: reorganization of the Pentagon, extension of reciprocal trade, and foreign aid.

Mr. Eisenhower's feelings are understandable enough. He always made quite clear the importance he attached to these measures, and he is naturally reluctant to help return to office any Republican legislator who opposed him on these key Administration issues. But his decision does not matter nearly as much today as it would have four years ago. Mr. Eisenhower now has only two more years to serve, and he cannot run again. His endorsement today is no guarantee of election, and some Congressmen do not even want it. In short, if Mr. Eisenhower wanted to be the architect of "Modern Republicanism"and remake the G.O.P., we fear he has waited too long.

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Controversy in New York

The dispute over the prescription of contraceptive devices in city hospitals raises the recurring question of how groups with differing beliefs accommodate themselves in a pluralistic society

by JAMES FINN

FOR MANY WEEKS now a controversy concerning the prescription of contraceptive devices in New York city hospitals has mounted steadily in intensity and bitterness. Involving as it does many complex issues with profound consequences, it has drawn interested statements from organizations and figures prominent in religion, politics and medicine. The controversy itself cannot, unfortunately, stay confined to the New York area; since it turns, ultimately, on the question of how various groups with strong and differing beliefs and attitudes accommodate themselves in a pluralistic society, any decision on this important issue will have significance for the entire nation.

For over a decade the New York Academy of Medicine, an association of about three thousand physicians, has urged authorities to revoke an unwritten regulation which forbids doctors to prescribe birth control devices in hospitals operated by the city. As open support for the position of the Academy of Medicine has grown, so has the demand for some official statement of the city's position. In New York City the official responsibility for any decision devolves upon the City Hospital Commissioner, Dr. Morris A. Jacobs.

Last April, in a letter to the Academy of Medicine, Dr. Jacobs wrote that there would be in city hospitals no interference "with proper and accepted therapeutic practices." The statement was welcomed by many groups, and a doctor in a county hospital, acting upon what he understood the letter to mean, moved to provide a contraceptive for a diabetic woman patient who was a Protestant. Another pregnancy, according to the doctor's diagnosis, would endanger her life. The action was forbidden. The case became almost immediately a test case and various groups soon put forth arguments in support of their respective positions.

Mr. Finn is an associate editor of The Commonweal.

The principal support for Dr. Jacobs' position came, as had been expected, largely from representatives of Catholicism, who reiterated the teaching of the Church that artificial methods of birth control violate the Natural Law and are, therefore, immoral. The Chancery Office of the New York Archdiocese issued an extended statement of the Church's position on this problem. In addition, various Catholic organizations made public statements; among these were the Catholic Physicians Guild, the National Council of Catholic Men, the National Council of Catholic Women, and the Pasteur Guild, an association of hospital employees.

Quite independently, the Association of Medical Boards of the Department of Hospitals of the City of New York asserted in a public statement that "it is the consensus of the members of the Association that birth control counseling and the supplying of contraceptive medications are not emergent matters of therapy and are available in private and voluntary agencies throughout the city—free of cost to those who cannot afford to pay." Thus the ban on birth control prescription, based on a recognition of this fact, "gives due recognition to the moral and ethical principles of all segments of the population, both lay and medical."

OPPOSITION to Dr. Jacobs' action came mainly from non-Catholic medical and religious groups, which asserted that contraceptive measures are permissible and sometimes desirable in order to protect the health of the mother or to prevent the birth of a defective child. One of the most active of these groups is the Protestant Council of New York, representatives of which met with Dr. Jacobs and presented medical, legal and moral arguments to support their views.

In addition to the Council, criticism came from the Presbytery of New York, representing sixty New York churches; the New York Board of Rabbis, consisting of

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more than seven hundred Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbis; the American Jewish Congress; the Interdenominational Ministers Alliance of Brooklyn; and the American Civil Liberties Union. Editorial opposition to Dr. Jacobs' stand appeared in the New York *Times, Post, Journal-American* and other papers.

The editorial in the N.Y. *Times* stated in brief the principal opposition argument. Saying that if Dr. Jacobs' letter meant anything it meant "that birth control, which is regarded by many medical authorities in New York and elsewhere as an important element in preventive medicine, can be prescribed in the city hospitals. It is, in fact, astonishing that there should be any doubt on the matter."

After recognizing that the views of those who find birth control profoundly objectionable—whether patients, doctors or nurses—must be respected, the editorial went on: "But those views cannot be controlling in regard to other persons. . . . Freedom of religion works both ways; and in this delicate area the city hospitals must certainly remain neutral, neither imposing birth control therapy, when it is medically indicated, on one to whom it is morally repugnant nor withholding it from those to whom it is not."

Thus the lines were drawn; the expected impasse had been reached. There are, on both sides of the question, intelligent people who are sincere, confirmed in their beliefs and well-intentioned. Yet the grounds on which the controversy is placed would seem to allow no compromise or agreement. More subtle and developed argument on either side will only refine the differences; it will not refine them away. Those who doubt this should consider a recent news report which suggested the possibility of a compromise solution.

In a conference with Protestant ministers, Commissioner Jacobs implied that medical counseling advising contraceptive measures might be given in city hospitals and the patient might then be referred to private voluntary agencies. This, however, was immediately questioned by a Protestant chaplain at a city hospital. "Why should city patients be referred to private voluntary agencies for accepted medical therapy?" he asked. "If a medical practice is improper and unaccepted in city hospitals, what makes it proper and accepted in private voluntary agencies?"

While this question cuts to the quick of the controversy, it shows how little some participants understand the issues. For, as any Catholic would answer, birth control measures are not any more proper or acceptable in a private agency than in a city hospital, but then Catholics do not support through taxes the private agency; their tax monies do help support the hospitals.

IT IS APPARENT that those who reject this "compromise"—which would be an acceptable solution to Catholics—exaggerate, or at least fail to define the issues adequately, when, in reference to this controversy, they speak of the "tendency of the Roman Catholic Church to impose its standards of morality on non-Catholics" or of endangering the lives of patients. For non-Catholic patients in the city hospitals now have the option of going to the private agencies for birth control measures, and if they believe that their lives are endangered, those who do not object to contraceptive measures will certainly take advantage of these agencies. Since it would involve no additional expense on their part, it is not a question of money, but of convenience—and principle.

Catholics are, of course, also acting on a principle and asserting their concern about the way in which their taxes are spent. But almost every citizen in this country is a member of a group which has such rights, and which at times expresses them. The continuing efforts of Protestant groups to ban bingo in New York is just such an example of a group attempting to impose upon the total social body what it believes to be right. In itself the action taken by Catholic groups in this controversy (exerting social and political pressure in order that their views may prevail) is very like the actions of other definable groups: religious, political or civic.

The realization, however, that various minority groups in this country maintain beliefs which are not shared by their fellow-citizens and that they can nevertheless claim a legitimate "right" to attempt to impose upon an entire community the practices which follow from these beliefs—this realization brings with it no solution. It is a necessary condition for understanding the area of controversy; but it is not the only or even the determining condition of any possible solution to the problem.

The pluralist society in which we live is a dynamic, still evolving society. It can be fairly described as an experimental society. And in the course of the experiment we have learned that all "rights" are not to be fought for, that to speak only in terms of rights is, in fact, to be somehow inadequate to the complexities of the actual situations which arise. The attempt to invoke the law so that the personal behavior of all members of the community will conform to the moral standards of the majority, or of some minority with significant political power, is a hazardous undertaking. Of this the nation has had several salutary warnings. For example, the attempt, largely on the part of Protestant bodies, to enforce a particular code of ethical behavior in regard to alcoholic beverages brought on the ill-fated Prohibition with all its attendant evils. The Prohibition laws failed, quite obviously, because they did not actually reflect the values of the community to which they were intended to apply. And insofar as they failed to reflect the values of the community, these laws were necessarily unsuccessful.

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WHILE such considerations apply to all groups, Catholics should see that they have particular meaning for the Catholic Church in this country. Although it would be foolish to say that "Church-State" questions are less complicated in the United States than elsewhere, it is true that they have developed here according to an historically unique and quite fortunate pattern. Constitutionally there is a clear distinction between the orders of competence of the Church and those of the State. This means that the State does not attempt to decide questions proper to the Church (what is sacrilegious, for instance), and the Church does not ask the State to enforce ethical codes which are not themselves supported by the society at large (can we use, for example, birth control legislation?).

It is evident that an element of self-limitation is here present. This element of self-limitation is highly desirable—it is, indeed, necessary for the ideal functioning of our society. Applied to any particular minority group, it means that that group would not attempt to impose upon the society by law every particular of its ethical code. Catholics, for instance, should not expect non-Catholics to accept restrictions on conduct which these non-Catholics regard as legitimate. In any case, it is practical wisdom for Catholics—or anyone else—not to attempt to have laws erected and directives established in accordance with their beliefs except where there is good reason to believe that there is, on the particular question, a consensus; only, that is, where the society can sustain such laws. Again, the example of Prohibition is pertinent.

The history of birth control legislation in the country is itself instructive. At one time the position now maintained almost alone by the Catholic Church—there are notable religious groups concurring in the Church's view—was widely held. In fact, in the only two states which place legal limitations on birth control measures, Massachusetts and Connecticut, the laws were devised and enacted largely by Protestants. But it is evident that beliefs, teachings, attitudes and opinions concerning such measures have changed greatly for many people during the last several decades. Where a consensus once existed, it no longer does. Or, more correctly, it has shifted ground. Other citizens cannot expect Catholics to change either their beliefs or their practices merely to conform to this newer consensus. But neither can Catholics expect to control the beliefs and practices of others concerning these measures.

Some have suggested that the acceptance of this position jeopardizes, or at least calls into question, the authority of the Church and the truth of its teaching. So far from this being the case, the reverse is more nearly true. For this position is based upon, and insists upon, the distinction between the authority proper to the Church and that proper to the State. It is where these are confused, where they are too forcibly yoked together, that the changing laws of society seem to endanger the unchanging doctrine of the Church.

And while we have been discussing these measures in the context of what best works for the natural good of society, it is clear that other benefits accrue to the group which is able to be properly self-limiting. If, in this controversy, for example, Catholics were to rely on education, personal moral suasion, and indoctrination rather than on a civil directive which embitters and alienates many people, the Church would surely gain in the long run. For those who resent directives imposed by another group can scarcely examine the claims of that group with sympathy or objectivity.

It becomes easy to see why the ways in which differing groups attempt to accommodate themselves to the pluralist society are still undergoing change and experiment. For what it means to be properly self-limiting is not always simple to say. Not only does the principle call upon a group to act in a way that will sometimes seem against its own immediate self-interest, but it involves prudential decisions of the nicest kind. The ethical objections of Catholics to the practice of birth control are fundamental ones, based on the Natural Law, and the Church is, after all, the guardian of the Natural Law for all the world. Certainly the Catholic Church cannot look to any other single organization for instruction in this matter. And where questions of self-interest are concerned, other groups frequently tend to speak and act with the same unbending and partisan spirit which, in this controversy, they find so firmly lodged in the Catholic citizenry.

IN THIS REGARD the extended statement of the Protestant Council of the City of New York is enlightening. In developing responses to the objections usually put forth by Catholics they said that no doctor should be expected to prescribe contraceptive therapy when this would be a violation of his moral code; nor would patients who objected to such treatment have it forced upon them. But in answer to the question "Should nurses who object to the use of contraceptive measures be expected to assist physicians in the fitting of devices to patients?" the Council replied: "Yes, the decision for medical treatment rests with the physician in charge of the patient and not with the nurse or attendant. . . ."

From an organization that speaks in the name of "freedom of conscience" this is an astounding declaration. For the nurse the medical action is to be free of moral implication—she is suddenly divested of the right or responsibility to make moral judgments of acts in which she is called upon to participate. One would have thought that the memory of those who in the recent past disclaimed moral responsibility for their criminal actions on the ground that they were only following instructions was too fresh to permit such an

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easy statement. And it seems, at best, odd that a group which objected to being restrained by Catholic teaching should wish to impose its own standards upon a particular segment of Catholics, who would necessarily find such an imposition morally repugnant.

It is because of just such attitudes that Catholics have proper and legitimate fears about reversing Dr. Jacobs' stand. And there are others to which members of other groups are relatively insensitive. Insofar as those who challenge Dr. Jacobs fail to understand these fears of Catholics so far do they simplify the issue and weaken their own case. And it may be well to mention that there are Jewish and Protestant bodies who share what is now so readily termed the "Catholic position" on birth control and share the same fears.

In spite of these quite proper concerns, however, it should be clear that there are many sound and compelling reasons why Catholics should not generally strive for legislation and directives which clash with the beliefs of a large portion of the society. In doing so they not only strain the limits of the community and actually lessen the persuasive force of their teachings but they almost inevitably strengthen in the minds of non-Catholics the already present worries about Catholic power. While Catholics cannot agree that such worries have a substantial basis, they cannot in controversies such as the present one say that they fail to understand why the fears arise. When Catholics seem to rely more upon the power of the law rather than upon moral force and influence they present an image of the Church which does less than justice to the glorious reality which it is.

ST. PHILIP AND THE MARTYRS OF JAPAN

1. In Mexico St. Francis found a child
And tried to wean it from the world:
Philip de la Casas, called
Philip of Jesus. Grieved at the
Inconstancy of sons, his father
Sent him to the Phillip Islands
On an errand. There "he tried
In vain to satisfy his heart
With pleasures." In 1594
He said his vows to Our Lady
Of the Angels in Manila.
What a ship of wealth to send his father!

2. In Mexico his father prayed him home;
He sailed upon a galleon
Of saints. The greedy devils crashed
And wrecked the craft upon Japan.
Above the ship an Oriental
Shape like a thickened cross
Hovered in the summer sky
And changed its leprous white to red.
For many years after Xavier
Died an exile from the West
Not to be a Christian still was best:

3. Early on the day a Christian boy
Woke from bed to news of death;
"Strong in grace the child expressed
His joy" and dressed himself in Sunday
Best to take the soldier's hand.
He prayed beside his father's headless
Trunk and loosening his throat
Cried the swordsman for his stroke.
The swordsman quailed: that little child
Became a saint tho not a man.
The heathen slave hacked the child and ran.

4. Saint Philip watched the deaths of families,
The brandishings with the iron cross,
Buryings alive while legs and arms
Were slowly sawed and all the blood
Was let to water plants of God.
The martyrs sent a flood of song
To slow the flame that chars the limb
So fast but chills the groin, that cooks
The eye so quick and cools the brain.
A thousand Christians, with candles lit,
Marched around the sounding sulphur pit.

5. Upon a green hill at Nagasaki
Philip sailed his youthful soul
To sea on a ship of contra-
Diction called a Cross of Christ,
An iron band around his neck
An anchor chain on either hand.
His ear was sliced to mark the rite
Of birth from life. That flimsy vessel
Wrecked to relics underneath
Its yoke of flesh and breath. "O happy
Ship!" Saint Philip sang, and choked to death.

6. This exotic plant that flowered on
Japan was rooted in the land
Of Juan, whose purple cape that might
Have taunted bulls and flecked the blood
Of oxes murdered in Madrid
Instead like some Veronique's lace
Changed into a holy native
Face, shedding tears of rose,
A cornucope of red, an ear
Of martyr's blood, a hand of coins
Offered as American alms:
Copper blooms of God in Francis' palms.

JOHN LOGAN.

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Fears about our economy's fundamental soundness are not dead but merely sleeping

The Future of Capitalism

by J. N. MOODY

FEW HAVE ACCUSED the United States Congress of consistency. Consistency would be highly difficult in a legislature so responsive to popular pressure; it might also be inadvisable in so fluid a world. But there can be levels in inconsistency, and this year a new high in changeability was reached in Washington.

A year ago Congress was pushing the Administration drive for economy so hard that at one point a certain percentage of our strategic bombers lacked fuel to remain in the air on uninterrupted patrol. In the spring, however, our legislators pressed funds so generously on the military that the Secretary of Defense had to proclaim his right *not* to spend the money that has been appropriated.

In part, this latter-day Congressional profligacy may have been a reaction to the consciousness of Soviet technological progress. But it is no secret that Congress also hoped that the lavish funds for defense would stimulate our lagging economy. Even mutual security appropriations had an easier time this year when it was pointed out that the greatest part of these would have to be spent on production in this country.

Facts such as these indicate that old fears about the fundamental soundness of our economy are not dead but merely sleeping. Have we really faced the problems posed so pointedly in the thirties, or have we been bailed out first by war, and now by the threat of its resumption? These questions are hard to answer, but we *have* determined our political course: both major parties are committed to a high level of production with nearly full employment, and both are willing to use maximum governmental pressure to achieve these goals.

Simple self-interest may be considered adequate justification for this bipartisan course. Any political party which permitted widespread unemployment to develop would court disaster. Indeed, it might even be responsible for a popular loss of confidence in democracy, for we should not forget that economic collapse contributed heavily to the fall of Weimar and the rise of Hitler. In any case, whatever the reasons, contemporary democratic peoples and their elected representatives have adopted the view that the whole community is responsible for the suffering involved in involuntary unemployment. Consequently, modern governments give relief to those who cannot find gainful employment and feel it is their humanitarian duty to restore productive capacity so that willing workers will again be absorbed.

These attitudes were not enshrined in our public consciousness, of course, without a struggle. Although there are now few who would deny that their acceptance represents real gain, their general adoption has nonetheless been rather recent. Certainly, when power-driven machinery was introduced into eighteenth-century England, the emphasis of economic theorists was on the rapid accumulation of capital and on the use of this capital for goods that would expand production—much the same emphasis, it should be noted, as that in the Soviet Union today, even if expressed in a different idiom.

The policies of *laissez-faire,* however, failed to satisfy the elemental needs of justice. This failure provoked a variety of responses in the course of the nineteenth century. It gave rise to radical theories which attacked the validity of private property in productive goods, and it encouraged the slow growth of protective devices by which society aimed to protect its members from the excesses of unrestricted *laissez-faire*—ameliorating tendencies that were supported by the ancient Western tradition of social justice and by the gradual emergence of political democracy. The result was the creation of a number of institutions and procedures which affected the distribution of wealth in a manner favorable to the majority of citizens who lacked productive capital.

Two consequences followed in the realm of economic theory. The protective devices thus developed gave the death-blow to *laissez-faire,* which was in any case already seriously compromised by the concentration of industrial enterprises and by the failure of competition to act as an automatic regulator; furthermore, they immunized advanced countries to the appeal of Marxism, which no longer seemed relevant to actual conditions in the more favored areas.

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WHILE OLDER THEORIES have been discredited by events, however, it is questionable if the newer forms of socio-capitalism are rooted on a firm theoretical base. Lord Keynes has been called the Marx of the twentieth century, yet it seems as difficult to get a consensus in the area of theory among contemporary economists as it is to find agreement among them on practical problems.

What is lacking in this situation is not critical forays against one or another of the assumptions on which our current policies are based. Recently, for example, Professor John Galbraith of Harvard in *The Affluent Society* (Houghton Mifflin. $4.) argued that we have never emancipated ourselves from the myths that characterized the early history of economic theory. With characteristic pungency he attacked his professional colleagues for not keeping in step with the march of events. They continue to live in a world of scarcity, he charged, whereas, in the United States at least, we have reached a stage where the vast majority have access to material goods sufficient for an adequate life. In this situation, we still emphasize production, still strive to increase our gross national product, still demand that our system provide full employment; yet, Galbraith believes, these demands are unreasonable in an affluent society. What is more, he thinks, they are dangerous to the welfare of that society, for they stimulate wants so artificial that they provide no base for continuing demand and result in creeping inflation that may paralyze the entire system. It would be better, in Professor Galbraith's opinion, to learn to live with unemployment and find ways to render it innocuous.

Galbraith's thesis in *The Affluent Society* has already been subject to extensive critical appraisal, but earlier this year a much more radical proposal for change in economic policy appeared, which received considerably less attention. This work, written by Louis O. Kelso and Mortimer J. Adler and titled *The Capitalist Manifesto* (Random. $3.75), was not content to smash a few idols, though it did this with high gusto, but took the adventurous step of outlining an alternative that it claimed would solve the major economic problems that disturb the free world. In fact, perhaps it was the very scope of these claims that account for the limited comment the book has received. Our generation has lost faith in a rationally ordered world and tends to dismiss "perfectionist" solutions without a hearing. Probably, too, the non-professional status of the authors was an obstacle to the acceptance of the book, for we have reached a degree of specialization in which one who wanders from a narrowly defined field is no longer thought to speak with authority. Thus it was a handicap that neither of the authors was a professional economist. Mr. Kelso had been a professor of law and is now working on a theoretical treatise that will be called *Capitalism*. Doctor Adler is well-known for a varied and brilliant academic career, but is usually associated with philosophy and the history of ideas.

The implication of the arresting title of the Kelso-Adler book is obvious. The authors seek to provide nothing less than a new foundation for "capitalism." They accept the fact that classical economics has been discredited and argue that the contemporary proponents of "mixed capitalism" have not offered a positive program for establishing an economically classless society. For this reason, they say, we have no satisfactory counter-weight to the Marxist challenge, despite our obvious achievements in providing large segments of humanity with an abundance of goods.

True, the partly socialized capitalism which has evolved in the United States and a few other advanced countries has realized many of the objectives of nineteenth-century radicalism without the violent revolution that Marx thought would be necessary. But our high standard of living is not in itself an adequate justification of the present system, the authors argue, for this would be possible along with slavery in a totalitarian state. What they envision is a solution of the thorny dilemma of the nineteenth century: how grant full freedom to owners of private property in capital and at the same time assure social justice?

IN RESOLVING this problem by a capitalist revolution, the authors foresee the fulfillment of a host of secondary objectives. They declare that their plan would not only mean a wider distribution of productive property, but would also eliminate the need of government to engage in the distribution of wealth. Thus political and economic power would be maintained in separate hands and the individual proprietor of capital would have the independence he needs to exert leverage against the improper encroachments of government. Thus free institutions would be strengthened and the drift toward socialism reversed. Most spectacularly, violent disturbances in the economic cycle would be curbed. Fluctuations would remain, but they would be minor.

What is curious in this large list of objectives is the association of the word "capitalism" with the ideal society of social justice. The term "capitalism" has become so charged with evil connotations, particularly in Europe and the underdeveloped lands, that lips seem to curl into a hiss as it is pronounced. The authors have no fear of the bogey, although they admit the attitude is historically justifiable. But they have faith that the just society can be born out of the present imperfect one, provided—and these are, surely, large provisions—that its potentialities are properly developed, and provided that men can be taught to use their leisure time creatively in the development of the liberal arts and science and of all the institutions of the state and religion.

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The authors make another break with tradition in their charge that currently capitalism is unfair to the owners of capital. They maintain that technological progress has steadily diminished the contribution of labor to the production of wealth. Men speak of increases in labor productivity, they say, but it is the capital instruments in the workers' hands which makes possible the added wealth. Thus the authors believe that ninety per cent of the wealth in the United States is being produced by capital, although seventy per cent of the resulting income is being distributed to labor. Yet, paradoxically, if labor were not so rewarded, our standard of living could not be maintained and our economy would collapse. How can this contradiction be resolved? There is no way, *The Capitalist Manifesto* declares, except to recognize that the right to earn a living is a right to property in the means of production. "Every man, or more exactly, every household or consumer unit, must own property in the means of production *capable,* if employed with reasonable diligence, of earning by its contribution to the production of wealth a distributive share that is equivalent to a viable income."

Conversely, the Adler-Kelso thesis goes, no one has a right to so extensive an ownership of the means of production that he excludes others from an opportunity to earn a viable income from productive property. Marx, they say, came close to diagnosing the basic ill of early capitalism, then missed it entirely when he located the evil in the possession of private property; he should have located it in concentration of ownership in the means of production, for such concentration is unjust and should not be permitted by law.

WHAT TO DO about all this? *The Capitalist Manifesto* may be inclined toward the utopian in its prospects, but it is realistic in its interpretation of the past. There is no nostalgia for a golden age when men were devoted to art, religion, and fine craftsmanship. As the authors see it, industrialism has been a boon, for it has eliminated the class-divided societies which allowed refinements for the few but left the many in misery. It is true that the mass culture of our time may threaten some of the achievements of the elite of simpler days, but in their view the price is not too great for the liberation of man from dependence upon manual toil and on marginal subsistence.

Since there is no question of going back, a limited number of alternatives are open to us. The first and most obvious is to continue to try to make our mixed capitalism work. But in following this course Messrs. Kelso and Adler believe we face crucial problems.

There is, for one thing, the problem of inflation. This we have so far been impotent to check, and it will be increasingly impossible to do so in the future, for full employment and spectacular technological change cannot be reconciled. To maintain the capitalistic form of production while we distribute its fruits in our present fashion would require us to raise output continuously in a constantly accelerating orgy of production. Government has attempted to meet this problem by a variety of stimulants to purchasing power: support of constant union pressure on wage levels; defense spending; easy construction mortgage credit; easy consumer credit for durable goods; subsidies for farm production; stock-piling; foreign aid; the rapid amortization program; expansion of the civil service; social security payments in excess of those actuarially supportable by the social security fund; failure to reduce the debt in times of prosperity and the like. All these show how deeply involved government is in maintaining the current level of consumer demand, and neither political party would dare to diminish such artificial stimulants to production. The price we pay is inflation.

Furthermore, mixed capitalism encourages a dependence upon government which is a threat to our democracy. In our system those who are neither capitalists nor members of labor unions do not gain their subsistence without dependence on the arbitrary will of other men. Even union members are dependent upon government, for without its aid they often could not make their demands effective. To such a situation it is only the free citizen with property who will be interested in limiting the power of government, yet such limitation is essential for democracy.

Finally, our system breeds numerous anomalies. A few examples will illustrate the point. We waste labor in producing agricultural surpluses we do not need. As hours are shortened, more workers hold two or three jobs. An increasing number of women with growing children enter the labor market. As Adler and Kelso see it, these situations are indices of excessive concentration in the ownership of capital, which is also the basic cause of the economic dislocations, or periodic depressions, which afflict our industrial society.

It would be dangerous, then, according to this reasoning, to attempt to maintain our present system. The authors accept the Djilas thesis that state capitalism divides the population into a ruling class and subjects, and that the former, composed of bureaucrats and Party leaders, is truly a possessing class since it has full control of the capital owned by the state. To advance toward state capitalism on the Soviet model would be folly, and the authors fear that our present policies are leading us to this condition without our knowledge or consent.

ALL THESE Kelso-Adler criticisms aim to prepare the reader for the demonstration of the necessity of Capitalism, as the solution is described. The key is the production of wealth by the voluntary association and the cooperation by private owners of the factors of

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production (i.e. private owners of labor power and private owners of capital) in which most of the persons involved will function as capitalists as well as workers.

Distribution would be determined among these persons by supply and demand under conditions of free competition. The labor force would be progressively reduced as automation is encouraged, with those not needed in mechanical labor being absorbed into leisure work or into subsistence work that is not mechanical. The high standard of living would be maintained with earnings on capital shares making up the deficit on wages, competitively set, which may not yet yield a viable income. Mature corporations would be required to distribute in full to their stock-holders the whole of their net income for each year. This would help reduce concentration of ownership, and would make these corporations compete in the open market for capital, instead of providing it out of earnings withheld from the stock-holders.

Is all this mere dreaming? *The Capitalist Manifesto* recognizes that the elaboration of these goals would only be an academic exercise if a feasible program for realizing them could not be devised. It admits the difficulties stemming from inherited prejudices and unforeseen contingencies. It appreciates that its proposals will have to reverse current trends, for "in the absence of governmental regulation designed to counteract it, the natural functioning of an industrial economy with private property in capital results in a progressively greater concentration rather than a progressively greater diffusion of capital ownership." But Adler and Kelso advance a number of suggestions, aimed at developing the base of capital ownership: equity sharing plans of sufficient magnitude so that the income from the equities would add a substantial item to the worker's income; modifications of death and gift tax laws so that recipients with small or no capital holdings would be wholly free from tax, while persons with large holdings would be steeply taxed; elimination of accelerated amortization; encouragement of new business enterprises and of new owners of capital, partly by making available to the latter the choice investment opportunities and by withholding sufficient labor income from consumption to build capital holdings; making credit available to the worker for capital acquisition; and new forms of investment insurance.

HOW WELL has *The Capitalist Manifesto* made its case? For a volume of this sort to recommend itself, it would have to do three things.

First of all, it would have to justify its criticisms of the existing system. This is probably the strongest section of *The Capitalist Manifesto*. Many of the points are well made and amply documented, though, as in all treatises seeking ideal goals, there is a tendency to picture the present reality rather grimly and to emphasize the unfavorable factors, such as the "drift toward Socialism." Furthermore, there are occasions when broad statements are made without adequate proof, as in the key claim that the concentration of capital ownership is the basic cause of depressions in a capitalist economy. But it is on this first aspect of the matter that *The Capitalist Manifesto* scores heavily.

Secondly, the volume would have to justify the desirability of the goals set forth. This is the easiest task, for it is widely conceded that a greater extension of capital ownership would be socially and humanly beneficial. In so far as *The Capitalist Manifesto* is an elaborate demonstration of this desirability, it is a useful addition to economic literature.

Thirdly, the volume would have to justify the practicality of the means set forth. By the admission of the authors, this is the most difficult and most tentative task, as in a sense it is the most necessary. Beyond the objections that might be offered to the concrete proposals, the acceptance of the plan would require a radical change of attitudes and values. And here it must be said that acquaintance with history and sociology does not encourage us to believe that this can readily be achieved.

In some Western European nations today, for example, there is little justification for class bitterness, yet it persists as a heritage from early industrialism. Or, to take another example, there is little reason in contemporary France for worker hostility toward the Church, yet anticlericalism has diminished but slightly. The fact is that the tenacity of social attitudes under changed conditions has been the despair of all reformers. Yet, for the execution of this plan, to cite only two instances, workers would have to be taught to seek capital equities rather than increased wages for consumption (or be coerced into doing so); and persons with ample or more than adequate capital would have to be persuaded to refrain from income-producing work and encouraged to do such things as teaching for the satisfactions involved. In reality, so many new attitudes would have to be created and so many new regulations involved, if the vision of *The Capitalist Manifesto* were to be attempted, that one wonders would the role of government be diminished or increased in the building of the new society.

Yet, with all this said—and these and other possible criticisms of the book are serious—the work of Dr. Adler and Professor Kelso is important. The value of a volume such as this transcends weaknesses in its component parts, for it provides us with a provocative invitation: to re-examine the foundations of our economic life and to think about the course ahead at a time when technological changes of immense magnitude loom on the near horizon. This, surely, is something we need to do, most urgently.

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James Agee

Rhetoric of Splendor

by RICHARD HAYES

HE DID, all seem agreed, a courtesy to life by being. Which is not, of course, to fail in lamentation of the riot and mischance of life, squandering extravagance of self: that trajectory of excess on which he spun to early death. Still, something in James Agee invited to a gentle awe.

"He looked," Mr. Lionel Trilling has written, "much as Daniel Boone would have looked if he had gone to Harvard." And indeed, like Boone, like Jay Gatsby, his linear descendant in the line of heroism, there was something splendid about Agee: it is there in those famous two photographs of him, one on the dustjacket of *A Death in the Family,* with its wrench of fierce energy, but another too—by Miss Helen Leavitt—full of vulnerability and quest and some poignant glamour or fatality of goodness. The face is more than appealing, more than beautiful: it is an announcement of that constant aspiration towards all excellence and light we sometimes call nobility. One hears of so many who knew him: I did not, nor ever saw him, but remember to this day the racy, quick joy of his moment in that film of *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky*: you would have given him anything, as he asked only that you celebrate with him a secret gaiety and grace of life.

He was born, James Agee, in Knoxville, and died in New York, in a taxicab, on the anniversary of that father's death which had been the wound and nakedness of his youth. We are told how he held tenaciously, through the burnishings of Exeter and Harvard, to some slight flavor of the mountain speech of his forbears; nor was that the last of his paradoxes. Though a poet in his resonance and quality, Agee found, in the looser prose evocation, an ideal form for his sensibility. In his homage to images of pastoral simplicity, he invoked a rhetoric heavy with baroque sinuosity, courtly in its posture and eloquence. It is a language with a moral as well as an esthetic intention; against an archetypal modern consciousness, fragmentary, complacent, desiccated with rationality, Agee's language sets fiercely a passionate unity.

In the *Partisan Review* symposium on Religion and the Intellectuals, Agee wrote with grief of the suspect status in which feeling and intuition are held; of the isolation of sensation, and the respect which is reserved alone for the thinking faculty: himself, he rejected the division, choosing "interplay, mutual discipline and fertilization." Finally, and it is the paradox which places him firmly in the American grain, Agee's sacramental attention to life was rooted in the ecstasy of his wonder at death. The boy in *The Morning Watch* moves into wisdom and love, but only within the shadow of Christ's passion and the violent enigma of nature, while for the child of *A Death in the Family,* presence can be made real, and loss felt, only by the impact of annihilation and vacancy.

AGEE'S WORLD—the world of these two lyrical prose evocations, and of the earlier *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*—is everywhere a ceremony, and to be known only by its hieratic gestures, its rich stuffs and incantations: a world supremely of being. It is not possible to read *A Death in the Family* with a fictional stringency. To the narrative sense, Agee concedes little; to the dramatically lyrical, all. There is no articulation of pattern, no velocity but that of grief, a fragmentary imposition of character as action, and above all, no movement through that stream which is the medium of the great novels: the stream of time. *A Death in the Family* does not pass, as fiction, beyond its single major event: the sudden extinction of a young husband and father in a capricious automobile accident. What it takes for substance after that is a dramatized ritual of those moments—hours and days, weeks perhaps, even longer—in which we do not live but merely endure: passages when time is annulled, and the current of life is brought up against a disabling check: death, radical shock, any obsession, the intensities of passion or love discovered.

It is the singularity of *A Death in the Family* to give such blasted heaths their own shape and particularity; in Agee's commitment to the exact, the *continuous* quality of experience, the poetic and the scientific impulse to accuracy—as Mr. Trilling justly observes—met. Indeed, Agee's tender fidelity to the actual—to the

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precise sounds of a cranking automobile engine on a summer night; to the precise way a man will settle his shirttails—is a function of his love, issuing from his conviction of each human destiny as unique but profoundly anonymous, solitary as a thumbprint yet drowned in time as those generations of men which fall in Homer, like leaves. This vision—void of anything like personal egotism or insistence, so infinitely, gently attentive to the specific—has not many American masters, one only, I would think: Whitman, the chanter. It is a dangerous mode, vulnerable to an easy lyricism and disembodied rhetoric, to catalogues. There is, indeed, a point at which "detail" may become an evasion, and *A Death in the Family* does not always transcend it.

Yet what we should imagine at work in Agee's labor of precision is the poet's old assumption of the task of epiphany, of creating a new lexicon of the world by naming each object and restoring to it a virginal freshness. He was interested, Agee, supremely in the child —not, be it noted, in the adolescent, that ambiguous figure who rams his horny way through our literature, and not, certainly, in the child as moral magnifying glass, or victim of adult guile—but in the child as a faculty of wonder: a gift Agee kept himself to a degree rare in mature experience. Which is to say, he would explore not so much the self as that old imponderable, Life and things in their pristine glamour, uniqueness and fatality.

THE POET works in metaphor, by apprehending the relationships between objects and discovering, in the endless variety of these, a secret unity. And it is uncommon how, in Agee's work, we are dominated by the polar tension of his metaphors—of age and youth, of violence and peace, virility and tenderness, death and life—each being known always only in relation to its antinomy. The images of his world have thus an undistracted force—a quality of extremity—proper not so much to the novel as to poetry. Indeed, these intensities of *The Morning Watch* and *A Death in the Family* are the distillation not so much of poetic rhythms as of poetic concepts, for in this search and thirst after an absolute wonder, only the ideal demands to be made real. Agee had a signal power, at once majestic and intimate, to project into language what is most deeply and dumbly felt in man's experience, and so sadly, often, soiled in the agonized or joyous telling. He saw that, indeed, as the poet's audacity, and in the fervent "Dedication" to his early verses, *Permit Me Voyage,* had sworn homage formally:

"To the guts and the flexing heart and to the whole body of this language in much love, in grief for my dulness and in shame for my smallness and meagreness and caution. May I in time become as worthy of it as man may become of his words."

With the maturity of *The Morning Watch* and *A Death in the Family,* he arrived at something like a rhetoric of splendor, weaving all that is courtly, choice and honorable in human expression into an elaborate artifact of verbal images, a ceremonial invocation through which man's experience in the world is not only known but constantly reborn.

THE DEFECT of this excellence lies in what Mr. Trilling has called a deficiency in Agee's moral vision: his inability to confront ambivalence, refusal to imagine whatever might impair or qualify the harmonious ideality of his world. "Human wills," Mr. Trilling writes, "however gentle and enlightened, inevitably limit and control each other; personalities will inevitably reach points of divergence, and the more they expect of and give each other, the greater will be the grievance at disappointment." There is, indeed, a sense in which the very choice of death as a literary subject may disclose the desire to escape from ambivalence, for the ubiquitous clamor of the actual being stilled, we are free to conceive past reality as an abstract and decorative perfection. And Agee's sacrifice to lyric dilation of this gritty, soiled testimony of experience denies him, one must concede, a certain large finality.

Yet the image of human life he fashions in *A Death in the Family* is not, by that fact, less tragic, for in it we see a gallant enterprise of will and desire brought at last to the shape of the cross. I say gallant, because the pressure of which we are aware always in Agee, in the tradition of which he was a son, and the world he would make real, is a constant aspiration, delicate yet imperious, to redeem the ordinary. To live without ambivalence must have seemed, and been, to Agee, a vast and noble ambition; to spend without stinting one's abundance of joy and life; to admit both responsibility and pleasure, virility and tenderness, power and need; to put, as it were, less of a demand on life, than to hope to be worthy of life's demands on one.

It is an impulse of heroism and aristocracy, yet what joins it in dialogue, making a tragic music, is Agee's knowledge of human limitation and loss: his images of people reaching out to the kind, solitary nature about them; to Christ in His unreadable love and unimaginable passion; and always to each other, blindly touching, taking comfort in a kiss, the pressure of an arm, a remembered warmth, gathering valor against the hour of their taking away, *by some chance, all on this earth, and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night.*

He was a poet, and so by his words would be known: and as the word *sweet* sends all its fragrance through Shakespeare, offered infinitely, and then again, as his highest good, what falls numberlessly on these pages of James Agee, like love, like night on the rough wet grass, is the word, *gentle.*

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THE SCREEN

HOME IS THE HUNTER

SOMETIMES movies don't turn out as their producers intended. Dick Powell, who produced and directed "The Hunters," undoubtedly meant it to pay tribute to the intrepid fliers in the Air Force, just as he honored the brave men of the sea in "The Enemy Below" earlier this year. From the visual point of view, Powell was quite successful: "The Hunters" has magnificent shots of jet planes in formation and in combat during the Korean war, and the cast is good. When he settled down to plot, though, Powell ran into air pockets; the script written by Wendell Mayes from the novel by James Salter has a lot of nonsense that even the handsome flying scenes and hard-working actors cannot cover up.

Richard Egan portrays the Wing Commander of the jet fighter group on duty at the Yalu River in an agreeable, straightforward manner. Robert Mitchum, more lively than usual, is positively likable as a World War II ace and major who joins the group as Flight Commander. Robert Wagner, although overly brash and obviously playing up to the teenagers (he calls Mitchum "Daddy-O"), is quite convincing as a young pilot who vies with Mitchum in downing MIG's. Somewhat harder to believe is a lieutenant (well played by Lee Philips) who is so full of psychosomatic symptoms due to fear that he should be hospitalized.

In the only important female role, that of the unhappy wife of the neurotic lieutenant, May Britt is lovely, and her falling in love with Mitchum—even though she's trying to save her marriage—is effectively portrayed. But the hitch comes when Philips, realizing that Mitchum is in love with his wife, offers him May in exchange for the opportunity to become a hero by downing a formidable Chinese ace. This absurd twist is both awkward and unrealistic—and so are the episodes that follow when Philips has to bail out behind enemy lines and Mitchum and Wagner go to his rescue and wander around the Korean countryside for five days. In view of the film's excellent flying shots in color and CinemaScope, the Defense Department and the Air Force will probably feel rewarded for the assistance they gave in the making of the movie, but only audiences who are not too fussy about plot will find "The Hunters" worth their while.

WHEN THE Schulbergs started "Wind Across the Everglades" they had a good enough idea: to show the struggles of the Audubon Society at the turn of the century in Florida to stop the ruthless killing of birds whose plumes adorned women's hats. Stuart Schulberg produced the film and Budd wrote its script, but the finished result is quite amateurish. Christopher Plummer is a fine actor, and he tries hard enough in the role of a young naturalist who comes to Florida to teach nature but ends up as a bird warden in the Everglades. At first he is no match for Burl Ives, who has a wonderful time hamming it up as the despotic boss of a vicious gang of plume hunters, but somehow Christopher wins out—whether through the charm of his acting or the nobility of his intentions is never made clear.

Some of the scenes in "Wind Across the Everglades" are very well photographed in Technicolor: a Fourth of July celebration on the beach; Plummer's wild night of carousing when he goes into Burl's scurvy camp to serve a warrant on the greedy villain; and, of course, several interesting canoe trips into the swamps, with good shots of birds and snakes and 'gators and animals eating animals. But the motives of the characters are hazy, and the picture has been cut and edited so badly that many scenes seem to have little relation to each other. The film has a love story involving Plummer and Chana Eden, but this is as confused as everything else. Budd Schulberg's script gives the impression of having been written on locale as the film was being made; and, although Stuart Schulberg hired as actors a group of people not usually associated with movies (Gypsy Rose Lee, MacKinlay Kantor, Tony Galento, Sammy Renick, Emmett Kelly) the script gave them little to do and Director Nicholas Ray was no great help in telling them how to do it. Disney would have been more sentimental about the egrets, but he would have made a better film.

NO DOUBT Producer Red Doff and Director Howard W. Koch ended with exactly what they wanted in making "Andy Hardy Comes Home"—a lot of corn and schmaltz to go with the nostalgia connected with the popular Andy Hardy movies which won big audiences from 1938 to 1946. Mickey Rooney, now thirty-six and still one of cinema's best actors, again plays Andy. Grown-up but with some of the old bounce, Andy returns to his hometown to select a site for an electronics lab—and, much to his surprise, the townsfolk oppose him. In between scenes straightening out this thin situation are a plethora of don't-you-remember sequences, with reels from the old Andy Hardy series showing young Mickey having a crush on starlets like Judy Garland, Esther Williams and Lana Turner. And the actresses playing Andy's mother, aunt and sister are back in their old roles. After Andy and the town patch up their differences, Andy is made the new Judge Hardy, and the film ends with Mickey on the bench. I shouldn't say "ends" because at the finale, the words: "To Be Continued" are flashed on the screen. No doubt a whole new series is planned—but I'm not sure for whom.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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OF NOTE

SHOULD NATIONS SURRENDER?

IN RECENT WEEKS, Congress, the President and many newspaper editorialists have been much exercised about a report that the Department of Defense had commissioned a study on the question of surrender in the event of H-bomb warfare. After a three-year study, a special commission of the Protestant World Council of Churches declared that Christians must oppose all-out use of nuclear weapons in war and in the event of such a war should urge a cease-fire, if necessary on the enemy's terms, and resort to non-violent resistance. This report was criticized in turn by the Executive Committee of the Commission of Churches for International Affairs, with the section on possible surrender on enemy terms being specifically cited. A Catholic opinion on the question of surrender appears in the July 19th London *Tablet* (128 Sloane Street, London, S.W.1, $7 annually) under the title "Hope of Survival." The article is reproduced in its entirety below:

One of the conditions of a just war, in the traditional Christian teaching, is that it shall have reasonable prospect of being brought to a successful conclusion, and without bringing about evils still greater than those it is fought to avoid. This is not in itself a condition which favors either side in the debate which Mr. Philip Toynbee has been conducting [in *The Fearful Choice: A Debate on Nuclear Policy,* conducted by Philip Toynbee. Gollancz, 8s. 6d.]. It can be used by Mr. Toynbee to support the view that there can never be a just war against an enemy equipped with nuclear missiles; or it can be used by Mr. Toynbee's opponents to support the view that it is the duty of every Government to ensure, if it is able to do so, that its striking power is at least as formidable as that of any potential aggressor. But if this condition of a just war does not resolve what Mr. Toynbee calls "the fearful choice," when it is ignored each side travesties the Christian position. The pacifists caricature what they repudiate, and those on the other side in this controversy can find themselves represented as taking the position which the Anglican Bishop of Rochester was reported as taking last weekend.

"Total destruction and possibly a lingering death for any survivors," the Bishop of Rochester is reported as saying, "would be a lesser evil than serfdom under a totalitarian domination, with its concentration camps, forced labor, regimentation, torture and brain-washing." To an extreme statement of this kind Mr. Philip Toynbee has an effective answer. He asks whether a majority of the Hungarians would prefer that a hydrogen bomb should now be dropped on Budapest, rather than that they should continue to live "in their present appalling conditions," and answers that of course they would not. So also, one might add with equal confidence, no one in Eastern Europe in the harshest period of "Stalinism" would have preferred the arrival of a hydrogen bomb to what they did in fact endure, a tyranny in which many indeed perished or vanished into the remote parts of Asian or Arctic Russia, but from which far more survived to keep alive not only a sense of national identity but also hope for the future.

Mr. C. M. Woodhouse recalls Gandhi's advice to the British in 1940, to let Hitler and Mussolini "take possession of your beautiful island if they wish." He says that any British government acting on this sort of advice would certainy fall at once; and we hope he is right. But this is by no means the same thing as saying that if a situation should arise in which everyone knew that there was no hope of survival except under Russian occupation then everyone would prefer not to survive.

If the government arranged what the only Catholic contributor to Mr. Toynbee's symposium, Mr. J. B. Morton, thinks it ought to arrange, which is a plebiscite —"one of the essentials of democracy," he says, "which has been completely forgotten"—then we do not doubt that the overwhelming majority, asked whether they

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by the missionaries, to relieve the sufferings of their people. One of these Kits, carefully designed for the most effective use, can be sent for a gift of $30. Many of the readers of The Commonweal have already accepted this opportunity. Will you not generously join that number? Send your gift to Rev. Edward F. Garesche, S.J., President, Catholic Medical Mission Board, Inc., 10 West 17th Street, New York 11, N.Y.

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would prefer annihilation by a hydrogen bomb or a Russian occupation, would prefer the Russian occupation.

For, if asked to choose between life and death, it is surely always the Christian reply to choose life, under however abominable conditions. It is a profoundly Christian tag that says that while there is life there is also hope. It is despair that chooses death; and just as a Christian must reject—as the Archbishop of Canterbury and Canon Collins and Mr. Morton all do—the despair which leads Mr. Toynbee to call for the preparation of all that is needed for mass euthanasia in case the bombs should be used, and to declare that he himself would not hesitate to kill his own children if it should become clear that the only alternative was to allow them to die slowly and in agony, so also we find it hard to think that Dr. Chavasse really holds "total destruction" to be "a lesser evil than serfdom." No Christian believes death to be an ultimate calamity. But neither does a Christian believe serfdom to be an ultimate calamity for those subjected to it.

It is perfectly possible, while holding that serfdom would be a lesser evil than the annihilation of the population, to believe at the same time that the Government has a duty to equip itself so far as possible with weapons that are the equivalent of any that might be used against it, and would have a duty to use those weapons in reply if a war of aggression should appear to justify their use in reply.

For of course the dilemma is unfairly stated. No one does have to make a choice stated in those terms, between annihilation and serfdom. At the moment when a decision for war is taken there is always, and must always be, even irrationally, the expectation that it can be a successful war. A war entered or a policy initiated in the knowledge that it will lead inevitably to annihilation is not only suicidal but, on that account, is immoral.

BOOKS

"Than Longen Folk to Gon on Pilgrimages . . ."

ONCE TO SINAI. By H. F. M. Prescott. Macmillan. $5.

By MARIAN SELDIN

H. F. M. PRESCOTT, who has written a first-rate historical novel, *The Man on a Donkey,* and two others which though not as good are yet the products of a craftsman, as well as a fine biography of Mary Tudor, in this book re-creates a pilgrimage to a point about as far from Europe as the Medieval pilgrim was likely to go —to Sinai, where God gave the law to Moses, and which was recognized also as the site of miracles associated with St. Catherine of Alexandria.

Her principal source is the *Evagatorium* of Friar Felix Fabri whose excursions to Jerusalem she retold in *Friar Felix at Large* (Yale University Press, 1950). Though she supplements the account of his "ramblings" with the works of other travelers and though the point of view of this second book, unlike the first, is less that of Friar Felix than of Miss Prescott herself, it is the Friar's personality which holds the center of the stage. A born traveler as well as a devout Christian and a good priest, F.F.F., as he likes to call himself, is a natural as a companion on a pilgrimage. His life and heart are centered in his convent home at Ulm, and perhaps because he is so certain of his place in the universe, he can fall in love with the desert, succumb to the spell of the sea, be intrigued by every hill and enthralled by any new experience (even that of watching the embalming of a friend's body), understanding all that is new or strange in terms of his ultimate "measuring-stick," as Miss Prescott calls it, Ulm.

His cheerfulness and capacity for enjoyment are in sharp contrast to the dyspeptic disposition and jaundiced eye of Friar Paul Walther, a Franciscan whose own account of the 1483 pilgrimage Miss Prescott uses extensively, too. An unhappy man, uncertain of himself and his vocation, Friar Paul is, nonetheless, level-headed and intelligent, and his comments, though rarely engaging, can provide a corrective for what Miss Prescott calls Fabri's emotional statistics.

The other pilgrims, in spite of Fabri's detailed recounting of incidents in which they take part, are less clearly individuals than are three of the Moslems upon whom the party had to rely for help and guidance. The villain of the piece is Taghribirdi, a Jew turned first Christian then Moslem, whose rogue's career Miss Prescott has traced in sources other than the accounts of the pilgrims. Fabri's party encountered him as Chief Dragoman to the Sultan at Cairo, sort of an interpreter-guide to visitors from the West, which important position gave him rich opportunities for fleecing even the most wary of Christians. Friar Felix, however, found one Moslem for whom he felt admiration and awe—Shadbak, the Dragoman at Alexandria, an austere man, both commanding and gentle, and another whom he truly loved —Elphahallo, who led the pilgrims across the desert from Jerusalem to Sinai and then to Cairo.

The point of view from which Miss Prescott sees the pilgrims, and the world through which they traveled, is Protestant, objective, and quite sympathetic to their aspirations, their failings and even their gullibility—something of an acid test of a scholar's tolerance. Aside from her interest in the pilgrimage itself and in the pilgrims as eternal tourists, avidly sight-

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seeing, naively wondering and diligently souvenir-hunting, she is fascinated, as is the reader, by the *Evagatorium* as an account of this most medieval of practices carried out in a world on the brink of the modern age. None of the conditions which shaped the Friar's trip would have been present even fifty years later. Venice, still Christendom's maritime power, was eclipsed in just a few years by nations whose ships discovered the route around the Cape to India. Alexandria, seaport to the East and West, lost its status when Europeans no longer needed to buy their spices from a middleman. The Mamluk Sultanate, that strange empire of ex-slaves which for two hundred years had ruled Egypt tyrannically and dealt with Westerners capriciously, fell before the Turks some thirty years after Fabri's visit. Most important of all, Christendom, so stable a concept to Fabri, was no more than forty years away from Luther and the Reformation. And Fabri, himself, with his interest in travel, botany and geography, his middle-class, German world-view, is a transitional figure—formed through the education and discipline of the Middle Ages, but touched with that spirit of adventure which is the Renaissance's most appealing trait.

Miss Prescott thinks it fortunate that the Friar, "with his devout but conservative mind," did not live to see the "Reformation shatter the unity of Western Christendom" and his own city of Ulm choose a faith he "must have judged heretical." But, though such events would have caused him grief, his disposition seems too stable and his intelligence, though not profound, too flexible to have left him completely at a loss before them. The man who comments on his return from his great adventure: "Who, I ask you, would ever have dreamed that F.F.F. would be a friend of heathens, and hob-nob with renegades; that he would perforce flatter the Turk, trust and collaborate with Saracens . . . show respect to Mahomet and walk humbly with the barbarian?" would have been able to accept the sixteenth century —or even the twentieth—as he accepted what for him was *outré* in his own time, with the aplomb a steady faith can give. Surely by the end of his pilgrimage he must have sensed that the Church is always beleaguered by the Turk or his counterpart without, by lazy monk, bad Christian or heretic within, that the human race must always deal with tyranny from the Mamluk or the Turk or the Venetian captain —and that both the Church and man survive.

A Legacy of War

DISCOURSE WITH SHADOWS. By Jean Malcolm. Doubleday, $3.95.

By WILLIAM DUNLEA

FRANZ GRUNWALD is an Anglicized German, orphaned by a Nazi purge, who passed the war years at school in England and is returning reluctantly to Frankfurt to determine whether his cousin Johann is still alive. The latter is officially listed among the lost, yet every day Franz ensconces himself in the rasping cold amid the rubble of Johann's house until at last he thinks he has glimpsed him. He cannot be sure, for the apparition vanishes instantly. Its existence is subsequently confirmed by the inscrutable Magda, a young woman whose hair falls over one side of her face to conceal a scar. She, Johann, and two other men she is sheltering are all survivors of Firzen concentration camp, where they served as subjects for such scientific experimentation as "pain measurement."

Johann's mind has been eroded to an imbecile stage where he is capable of nothing but obeisance. Pierrot, the involuntarily comedic philosopher of the group, and a teacher in prewar Prague, was deserted by his wife, whom he remembers with less measurable pain than any inflicted by experimental

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torture. Hugon, a former Warsaw musician who always wears a glove on one hand to shield his contribution to science, is the one who dreams of revenge. Franz, as haunted as the rest, is accepted as one of them. Before submerging in the last refuge of apathy, he drifts casually into love with sexually deprived Magda. But happiness, alas, is a fleeting prize.

For a spell these are, albeit haphazard, yet touching specimens of war's driftwood, given the rather lunar atmosphere that invests them. But even this umbrageous reality is soon dissipated. A sinister Nazi camp-follower is suddenly exhumed, with an American major in tow, from their nightmares of past internment. As an impassive spectator while they underwent the experiments, she becomes the symbol of the evil that nearly destroyed them. Hugon hears the call and draws up an elaborate murder scheme, bludgeoning the others into collaborating. Before character has a chance to evolve it is eclipsed by melodrama, which in turn is pitted with improbability and finally punctured by anticlimax.

Jean Malcolm selects an unfortunate strategy for a first novel, presuming as she does to muffle her voice in a narrative of the multi-monologue before having identified that voice. A writer earns the right to "efface" himself after he has arrived at this identification; otherwise he obtrudes in the most awkward way of all. Franz, Magda and Pierrot, who do the most arduous monologuing, are therefore never more than indefinite articles with whom it is impossible for the reader to identify. In this situation only one string remains to the writer's bow: he bids for a purely melodramatic impact. Bathos is a rearing pitfall in this expedient, and it needs a writer of the most controlled virtuosity to negotiate it.

The idiot boy Johann is also set down, in a more abbreviated monologue which turns out to be an innocent parody of the entire device, for it begins to prompt such questions as, when does an arrested mind soliloquize like an arrested mind? Hugon is the only one who does not have a solo. This might be because he, the man of action, would not be so prone to jumble his tenses. He also is considerably less fleshless than the others. One may ponder the coincidence. At the same time it could be facetiously objected that these are really only intended to be shadows with discourse.

It is sad enough that instead of being quickened with the sinews of contrast, these shadows have, as such, been swathed in a dense murk that makes them quite literal, quite outsize. They are mere shades of themselves and suggesting nothing of the world around. But no illusion of reality could be upheld by the prose itself, because its professionalism is so patent it would come through even a whole legion of shadows.

As a biographical note, Miss Malcolm is a Sumatra-born Scots writer who worked with the Office of the Chief Historian of the U. S. Army in Frankfurt for a period after the war; she is now sub-editing a woman's magazine in London.

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Joel Barlow

A YANKEE'S ODYSSEY. By James Woodress. Lippincott. $5.95.

By JOHN COURNOS

CONNECTICUT farmer boy, student at Yale on the eve of the Revolution, member of the American militia, preacher, lawyer, Connecticut Wit, poet (a poor one!), high-pressure salesman abroad for American lands not strictly speaking in the legal possession of his partners, a first-rate pamphleteer (with Thomas Paine) for liberty in England and France, above all a superb diplomat who served his country well in tight spots, Joel Barlow fully deserves this large volume of his life and doings, a work sufficiently exhaustive to make it the likely source-book for all future biographers.

With all his manifold activities Barlow managed to be a loving husband too, though in retrospect one must pity Ruth Barlow, who suffered many separations while Joel was away on dangerous missions. Well she might have confessed, as she did to a friend, "Politicks, how I hate the mischief-making word! . . . How does it blacken characters, separate friends, & ruin families!" And actually it did all this, for when a little over a decade later Joel went to France to negotiate with Napoleon for a more liberal policy with respect to trade and shipping, he ultimately, after protracted negotiations in Paris, had to journey in sub-zero weather over rough roads to Wilna to renew his conversations with the conqueror of Europe. In this bitter weather Barlow contracted pneumonia and died in the little Polish village of Zarnowiec, where he was buried in the local graveyard. In this connection it is interesting to note that a bill was introduced in the Illinois Senate in 1930 to build a monument at his grave, but the bill failed.

Save for the journey to Poland, the most perilous journey, if more successfully performed, that Barlow made was to Algeria, where he set himself the task of freeing many American sailors who for years had been held as slaves by Hassan Bashaw, the Dey, a singularly ferocious fellow, who lived by piracy and political blackmail. Here, at great peril to himself, he spent weeks while communicating with the American government; he saved the sailors and his own skin only by resorting to Machiavellian tactics, his only possible resource.

Incidentally, Barlow achieved great wealth. To be sure, his greatest ambition was to write the great poetical epic of America. In this field, the author of *Columbiad* proved a wretched failure. He neglected his other ambition, that of writing a history of America, even though Washington, Jefferson, and other great Americans of his day offered him their notebooks, memoirs and valuable documents. Mr. Woodress's book is an extremely valuable piece of Americana, which portrays an important national figure who does not deserve the neglect he has suffered.

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A NOVEL, A NOVELLA, AND FOUR STORIES. Ay Andrew Lytle. McDowell, Obolensky. $4.95.

By JEAN HOLZHAUER

ONE YEAR AGO I commented in these pages that Mr. Andrew Lytle's first novel, *The Velvet Horn,* left something to be desired as an intelligible and significant story. Quoting liberally to prove my horrid points, I said, in fact, that it left nearly everything to be desired.

A few months later *The Velvet Horn* was nominated for the National Book Award, and a number of distinguished people took the opportunity to praise it. Among these was Miss Caroline Gordon, who wrote, "Andrew Lytle breaks most of the rules and emerges with a novel that is beautiful and terrible and utterly his own. I suspect that it is a landmark in American fiction. I do not know any other novel like it."

I respect Miss Gordon's judgment, and when it occurred to me that except for a single adjective and a variant inflection I could truthfully repeat every word of her statement, I thought for a wild moment that she might have been joking. But I know her to be serious, even intense, in professional matters, and I must conclude that my obtuseness in appreciating Mr. Lytle stems from unreasonable prejudice against some of the trappings of Southern fiction and against

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the stylistic tricks employed in his earlier book.

The prejudice has not decently withered away in the intervening year, and now we have a new Lytle volume, bearing the surprising title recorded above. It is dedicated to Miss Gordon and her husband, Allen Tate.

History and prejudice accounted for, Mr. Lytle has extended his range and subdued his interest in tedium, although he still writes in the leisurely pace of a man convinced that he has a subtle story to tell, and an obligation to leave no nuance unexplored. The most effective of the six offerings here is a story, "Ortiz's Mass," describing a a Spanish explorer returned from a nightmare of captivity by Indians to attend church with his commander, De Soto. The words of the Mass are contrasted with flashbacks into his adventure, and the suggestion of personal interpretation in traditional ceremony achieves a wider reference and deeper truth than the other tales.

The novel of the title, *A Name for Evil,* is a ghost story told in the first person by a protagonist who ignores his premonitions until, two hundred pages later, it is too late. "To yearn for the West is simply to yearn for death," he rather incomprehensibly remarks early in the story. "Why was it given to me, to me alone, to understand it like a prophet and suffer it like a martyr?" Mr. Lytle's character development is such that in the end neither his hero nor his reader is the wiser. Why, indeed?

It is saddening to reflect that Mr. Lytle will never dedicate a volume to me.

REVIEWERS

Marian Seldin, a New York reviewer, has previously contributed to The Commonweal.

William Dunlea reviews regularly for The Commonweal.

John Cournos is a well-known anthologist and expert on Americana.

Jean Holzhauer writes frequently for *The Critic, Today,* and other publications, as well as for this magazine.

NEW LIFE IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

by Leo R. Ward, C.S.C.

The Catholic school system in our country has been "recklessly sacrificial." Paradoxically, that is not enough. All too frequently other good ends, "piety, propaganda, missionary efforts," have stood in the way of Catholic learning. It is an historical fact that our Catholic schools were set up to safeguard the faith and morals of boys and girls. That is what they still operate for. If they have not produced top-flight scholars it is chiefly because they were not intended to produce them. All documents of the early Church in America show this. The piety motive and the faith motive, valid as they are, have obscured zeal for learning and scholarship.
Father Ward sums up his case in saying that Catholic teachers with "ideals out of this world" have sometimes permitted piety or dogma to substitute for knowledge. Tricks of piety can hurt knowledge.
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Non-Partisan Politics

At this point in our national history we make no secret of our conviction that the nation and the free world are not getting from Washington the leadership that is needed. With a few obvious and honorable exceptions, we think that is true of both political parties. However, since the Republican Party is in command of the Executive branch, which bears major responsibility in the area of foreign policy, it is inevitable that our criticisms will bear most heavily on the Republicans. . . .

Who is doing the thinking in Washington — not just about today's problems but about the future? Who is judging disarmament proposals with an eye to the day when every small nation in the world may have the ability to wage H-bomb warfare? Who made the basic decisions that let the Russians achieve a massive two-year lead on us in missiles? Is anyone planning now to meet the explosion that seems inevitable in the Middle East, or will we be caught by surprise again, as we were in Latin America? What positive steps are being taken to hold together and strengthen the Western alliance? Have we thought through what our stand on Germany will be when Chancellor Adenauer is no longer in power? or on Formosa after Chiang Kai-shek is gone? Has Washington lost its power to generate new ideas and to arouse the people to the challenge that confronts us?

It may be argued that we expect too much from our national government, or that no set of political leaders could do what we think needs to be done. But we do not believe it. We remain convinced that the United States could and should have more leadership than it is receiving. We could not care less whether this leadership comes from the Democrats or the Republicans or both.

—From The Commonweal, May 30, 1958

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